

Cultural Facilities Grant

The Grand Auditorium Application Narrative

1. **Describe the project and the specific renovations that are needed? Please describe how this project relates to previous renovation and reconstruction activities. What steps led to the recognition of need?**

It is part of The Grand's strategic plan to fully develop the physical, financial and fundraising plans to improve and renovate The Grand facilities. Projects have been prioritized, and it has been recommended that we act swiftly to correct the drainage problem that allows the theatre to be flooded seasonally and during heavy rains.

The rear retaining wall has collapsed, taking with it a drain which allows for ground water to be channeled into the City of Ellsworth sewage system. Recommendations from an engineering consultant include excavating and replacing the existing foundation & drain, grading the earth to about 10 feet back and removing the concrete wall. The excavation consultant gave an estimate of \$5,000 to replace the drain, and \$5,000 to remove the concrete and slope the bank

2. **Document how the organization is able to financially undertake this project. Who has been involved in the planning for the initiative? Who will carry out the renovation or technology upgrade?**

Eero Hedefine, a local engineer and neighbor to The Grand made the engineering recommendations. R.F. Jordan has reviewed the project and offered their estimate for excavation, drain repair, wall removal and re-grading of bank. The Grand's Facilities Manager will oversee the project. The Grand currently has \$5,000 escrowed for this project through donations, half of the estimated cost.

3. **How does the initiative include or support the creation of quality arts activities? How do these upgrades fulfill the organization's role in the community?**

Each spring our orchestra pit is flooded with water seeping through the rear wall of the theatre and under the stage. There are stories (from four years ago) of the Gilbert & Sullivan orchestra playing in their Wellies(!) as water was up to their ankles. While our Facilities Manager works to wet-vac the area in front of the stage, it is impossible to keep up with it during heavy rains and during the spring thaw. The water creates a safety hazard for ongoing activities at the theatre, and limits seating, as the front row of seats are unavailable if the pit is full of water.

To repair this problem would mean we could invite live bands to perform throughout the year (the orchestra pit is our dance floor); that the Gilbert & Sullivan orchestra could play in comfort; that any electrical wiring would be safe for live stage performance; that our patrons could be seated in the front row of the hall for movies and HD simulcast events; that our sponsors and donors could see safety improvements to assure greater funding resources for continued program enhancement.

4. **How will this renovation create greater opportunities for accessibility for community members, staff and board, in an effort to provide the arts for all people?**

The mission of the Grand Theater in Downtown Ellsworth is to enrich the lives of people in Downeast and Eastern Maine by presenting diverse, unique, high-quality programs that provide entertaining, artistic, educational and social experiences. To achieve this mission, our strategic plan through 2013 includes

expanding our programming to include opportunities for people of all ages and income to attend The Grand. This also includes our role as stewards to an aging, historic facility.

Providing a safe and comfortable environment not only allows for our patrons enjoyment of entertainment, but allows for organizational growth, as those who attend can see the historic theatre as well maintained. Our patrons and donors in the community who contribute to a wide variety of programming are encouraged when the facility is improved for safety and accessibility.

It is most important that this excavation/drainage project be completed in Spring of 2011. We are most grateful for Maine Arts Commission consideration for support.